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*Islands on
the Western
Horizon*

A photograph of a lighthouse on a grassy hill. The lighthouse is white with a dark top section. It is situated on a hill with a dirt path leading up to it. The foreground is filled with yellow flowers and green shrubs. The sky is clear and blue.

“William Gerald, the Channel Pirate” A Smuggler of the Islands

Michael Buxton

While the preceding article revealed the cat-and-mouse game played on and around Southern California's islands by smugglers and lawmen, the following offers a close-up look at a single smuggler's life. Although the pirates of the distant past have come to seem glamorous and appealing, this “pirate” epitomizes a class of mariners often overlooked in our modern nostalgia for wooden ships and iron men—the criminal class.

—the Editor



William Gerald was a seagoing career criminal who utilized the islands off Southern California and the Baja California Peninsula to hide his illegal operations. The story of his ill-fated career is told primarily in police and prison records, newspaper articles, and the recollections of his San Diego contemporaries. This small-time criminal's life provides insight into the lives of mariners who risked the perils of the sea and the harshness of the law for a boatload of bird guano—or risked the lives of the undocumented human contraband they frequently carried.

Frank William Gerald, born at San Francisco in 1873, was raised near the shore of San Diego Bay at Ballast Point, where his father was caretaker of the unoccupied army barracks at Fort Rosecrans.¹ Prison records describe him as a man of medium build, with brown eyes and a swarthy complexion. He began his illicit career at seventeen, when he attempted to cheat Herbert Young, owner of the boat *Sea Foam*.² After giving Young ten of the boat's fifty dollar price as a down payment, Gerald boarded *Sea Foam* and sailed her to the nearby Carlson-Higgins wharf, at the foot of present-day Market Street. Having no legal title, he was promptly arrested for grand larceny. The judge, however, ruled that evidence was insufficient to merit prosecution and the charges were dismissed.³

In 1892, Gerald listed his occupation as “seaman,” but by 1894 he described himself as “master mariner.”⁴ That he was not boasting is suggested by a dramatic rescue of eight men stranded on the remote Mexican island of Guadalupe.⁵ On Isla Guadalupe, sometimes operating within Mexican law but often outside of it, entrepreneurs hunted feral goats for their skins. “They used to bring in loads and loads of goat hides on the small schooners,” recalled William Woolman, a San

Diego Customs Agent in 1900.⁶ Attempts to re-supply these particular hunters had failed due to rough seas and heavy weather. After the schooner *Alcalde* was blown four hundred miles off course while trying to reach the island, Gerald was contracted to sail for Guadalupe. After successfully navigating the junk *Chromo* across one hundred miles of open ocean, he rescued the men, who had survived for twenty-four days on goat meat.⁷

Gerald developed those seamanship skills during the early 1890s when he took command of the *Chromo*, a two-masted, forty-foot junk built in 1891 by Chinese fishermen in San Diego and purchased by Henry C. Gerull.⁸ Gerald began poaching guano from islands near the Baja California coast, an unglamorous and illegal but profitable operation. Poachers hauled their boats close alongside rocks covered with centuries of accumulated seabird droppings, and sacked it as fertilizer. The product found a ready market in San Diego, where Riverside orange growers paid eighteen dollars a ton in 1895.⁹ Island guano resources, however, were the property of Mexico and thus “guano men” like Gerald were reportedly always “armed to the teeth and looking for trouble.”¹⁰ *Chromo* was part of the ragtag group of small San Diego-based boats known locally as the “mosquito fleet,” most of which were in the guano trade.¹¹ Their voyages, often lasting around thirty days, carried Gerald and others to coastal rocks and islands up to 350 miles south, where they plundered guano deposits with impunity.¹²

The exploits of the young nautical ne’er-do-well appealed to his fellow San Diegans, especially as he began to come into conflict with Mexican authorities. Under the headline “Outwitted the Officers,” the *San Diego Union* related that “he has had several scrapes with them, but generally managed to patch them up.”¹³ In August 1895, however, Ensenada officials learned that Gerald had been stealing guano and unloading it in San Diego.

Comandante Luis Fernández, Captain of the Port at Ensenada, seized the *Chromo*.¹⁴ Joe Brennan, a fellow mariner who grew up on Point Loma near Gerald, recalled that “they caught Billy, took him in to Ensenada, and arrested him. They put some soldiers on the end of the wharf and his boat was tied to the buoy out in the bay.”¹⁵

Herbert Hensley, a San Diego customs agent at the time, recalled what happened next: “Billy was allowed to live on his boat, *Chromo*,” where at night,

Gerald displayed the customary masthead light, and, as long as he saw this

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Locally-built fishing junks passed into smugglers’ hands, as restrictive legislation aimed at Chinese fishermen forced their sale to owners who had purposes other than fishing in mind.

Above, MMSD Coll.; opposite, courtesy National Archives, Seattle



The *Ellen*, above, part of the “mosquito fleet,” was captured in 1896 with a load of contraband guano after a dramatic chase through Mexican waters by a dozen armed Mexican officers aboard the chartered steamboat *Carlos Pacheco*, that ended with the *Ellen*’s crew of two in irons. Below, sleepy Ensenada, a few years after Gerald’s brush with the *Aduana Maritima* there.

Above, MMSD Coll.; below, from Arthur Walbridge North’s *The Mother of California*

burning, the guard presumed the *Chromo* was safe at her mooring. But Billy was seized with a bright idea. He anchored an empty barrel close alongside, fastened a long pole to it with the lantern attached to that, and then sailed away in the night without the guard suspecting anything wrong.¹⁶

Gerald “hoisted sail and beat it,”¹⁷ and entered San Diego Bay three weeks later, after stopping to steal a load of guano from the islands on his way home. Upon his arrival, Gerald boasted that “he was going to write to the captain of the port at Ensenada and request the return of his lantern.”¹⁸ When Fernández learned that the *Chromo* and Gerald had skipped out, the *Union* reported delightedly that “the air was blue for an hour with big round oaths,” and “the Comandante said, with his black eyes flashing and his mustache twitching that if he ever caught Gerull he would eat him like an oyster—shell and all.”¹⁹ *Chromo* was now a wanted vessel, and Gerald a wanted man. “Mexican officers from now on will keep sharp lookout for the Yankee, and if he is captured by them, chances are good for making his home in jail for a decade or two,” a prediction that ultimately proved not far off the mark.²⁰ To cover his wake, Gerald began using the alias William Gerull.²¹

He continued in other maritime criminal activities as well. Prior to the Ensenada episode, Gerald and his partner, Henry Gerull, fleeced Charles Smitt of \$250 in gold after selling him half interest in the *Chromo* in November of 1894. As co-owner, Smitt was entitled to half of the vessel’s profits, but after eight months Gerald and Gerull had spent over seven hundred dollars of their proceeds on such crucial marine supplies as whiskey, shoes, and doctor visits, leaving a total of \$1.50 for the upset investor.²²

Gerald acquired the thirty-five-foot, thirteen-ton sloop *Minna*, built in San Diego in 1895, and ostensibly fitted her out for whaling, but instead sailed to poach guano with another shady mariner, E. S. Goddard.²³ U.S. Customs officers suspected that he also smuggled illegal Chinese immigrants from Mexico to remote Southern California beaches by using San Clemente Island as a transshipment point—a crime which carried the penalty of a thousand-dollar fine and a year in jail.²⁴ In 1897 Customs officer J. C. Fisher requested that the revenue cutter *Corwin* hunt down the *Minna* after Gerald and his schooner were fingered by an Ensenada informant:

I am convinced that the schooner is the *Minna*, Wm Gerull master. Gerull called at this office on Saturday, Nov 27, and obtained his papers stating he was going over to San Clemente Island but did not leave this port until Wed. morning Dec 1. Soon after he left again yesterday (thurs.) morning at 9 o'clock. Had it not been for the storm, he would have made Santo Tomas, Mex. in time



to have connected closely with the Chinese that left Ensenada.

Inspector Fisher continued:

Gerull is engaged in smuggling Chinese and we have been watching him for the past year, but have been unable to get any positive evidence against him. I would suggest that you go over to San Clemente and if the *Minna* is not there, then proceed south and see if she can be located.

If she is discovered in Mexican waters, take careful observation of the locality, so that I can proceed against her on her return for going foreign without clearance.²⁵

With its usual affection for a local seagoing scoundrel, the *Union* reported that

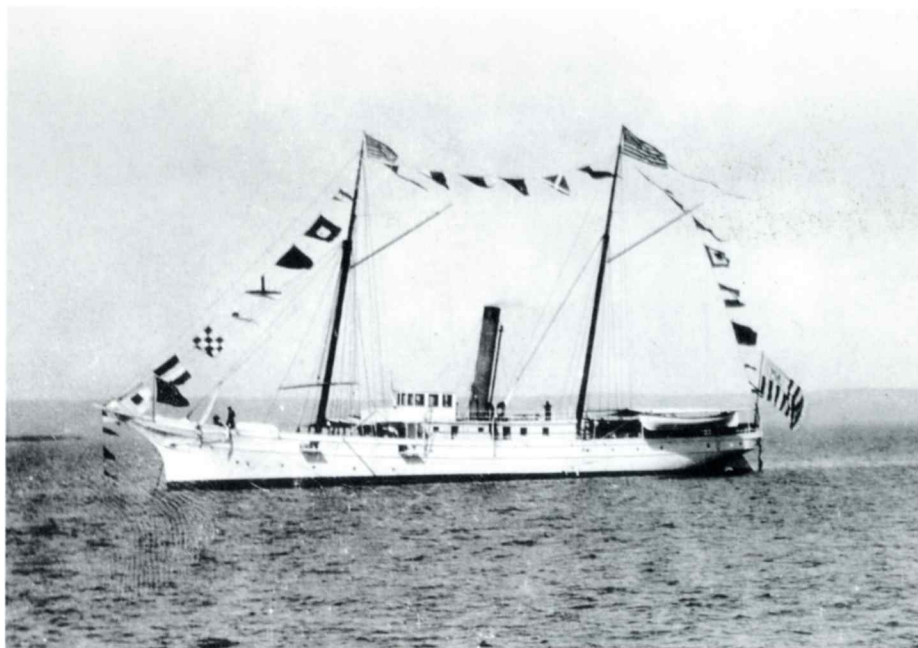
the *Minna* sailed from this port some days ago on what seemed to be an ordinary guano cruise. She has frequently made trips down the coast with other vessels of the mosquito fleet, but until now, no suspicion has been attached to her as a Chinese smuggler. Her skipper, Gerull, is a young man who has a reputation as one of the craftiest sailors on the front. He has many narrow escapes from capture at the hands of the Mexican officers but he has always come out ahead in these encounters.²⁶

The *Corwin* quickly got underway for San Clemente Island, but luck was with the captain of the *Minna*. Informed by passing fishermen that the *Corwin* was hot on his wake, with an air of innocence he expressed surprise and "disclaimed any idea of entering the lucrative business of Chinese smuggling," insisting that his interests lay, in a reporter's lofty phrase, solely in his "humble job of pursuing the fleet but toothsome abalone."²⁷ Instead, Gerald landed the Chinese on San Clemente Island and sailed for San Diego, where he arrived three days later, leaving the Chinese ashore under the watchful eyes of his deckhand and Chinese fishermen who were already camped on the island collecting abalone. The *Corwin* searched San Clemente and Santa Catalina Islands and San Pedro, finally heading south to Ensenada, where her captain tried to give some diplomatic purpose to his failed mission by rendering a seventeen-gun salute to the governor of Baja California.²⁸

Three weeks later, Gerald set out for San Clemente Island aboard *Minna* to retrieve his cargo of illegal immigrants. A gale sprang up and *Minna* foundered in heavy weather.²⁹ After Gerald reported the loss to authorities, a customs official from Santa Barbara investigated and found "reliable information that thirteen Chinamen had been illegally landed on Clemente Island" by a sloop from San Diego, whose name they rendered incorrectly as *Minnie*. According to the Inspector,

it having been reported that there was a lot of Chinamen on board the "Minnie", from Mexico, and that it was the intention to land them in the United States.

As far as I can learn, the cutter did not capture anything; but the report said that the master of the "Minnie" was aware of the fact that he was being



The revenue cutter *Corwin* was photographed on San Diego Bay in 1893.

MMSD Coll., P7817



The Coronados have long been a smugglers' haven. According to *The Overland Monthly* in 1913, the majority of illegal immigrants "patronize the boatmen smugglers of the Pacific at the risk of being marooned on the Coronado Islands, swept from the decks of the little power launches used to transport them, or at the risk of being subjected to extreme privations."

San Diego Historical Society Photograph Coll., ca. 1930

agents were dispatched:

Three Chinamen were found engaged in fishing for abalones, all provided with certificates. These men said they were expecting the "Minnie" to bring them provision and to take away the shells and dried abalone meat, of which was found a large quantity stored. These men said there were no other Chinamen on the island. As there is but one place on the island where water is to be had, I believe the statement of these men to be true. No other Chinamen were found, neither camps nor signs of any.

A sea-man, E. Yvay, formerly of the *Minnie*, was found destitute at sheep-camp, and was brought over to San Pedro by the officers.³⁰

Gerald had fooled officials, and eventually returned to the island, successfully smuggling the hidden immigrants to the mainland on board the schooner *Lou*.³¹

William Gerald's luck, however, would soon run out. In 1898, Gerald, Herbert Young, and Francisco Reyes sailed the gasoline launch *Pastime* to Sau Sal, a remote beach seven miles north of Ensenada, and took fifteen Chinese on board.³² During her passage north, the *Pastime* encountered headwinds and ran low on fresh water near the Coronado Islands. The smugglers tried to land there using the *Pastime's* dinghy, but it capsized in heavy surf. Fishermen rescued the men and supplied them with water. The *Pastime* then sailed for Anaheim Landing in Orange County, where the Chinese debarked. Residents, not believing Gerald and Reyes' story that they had run out of gas while sailing south from Santa Barbara, informed the authorities. The *Pastime* was seized and Young, her owner, was arrested. Gerald and Reyes got wind of the arrest and fled across the border to the mountains of the Sierra Juarez, northeast of Ensenada. Two months later the fugitives returned to San Diego after growing beards and taking other measures to disguise themselves, but were arrested for vagrancy. After police became aware of their identities, Gerald and Reyes were sentenced to six months in the San Diego County Jail for violation of the federal laws excluding Chinese immigration.³³

Gerald headed for Santa Barbara after his release, where he apparently

chased, and that he landed the Chinamen on Clemente Island, and from there returned to San Diego.

On December 22, the Master of the *Minnie* appeared at San Pedro and reported that his vessel had capsized in a squall off Clemente Island.

There, an informant told San Pedro's Deputy Customs Collector James Hay that "the 'Minnie' was at the time of foundering bound for Clemente for the purpose of removing and landing the Chinamen formerly left there; also that there was one of the crew left on the island." After considerable search for a suitable (and economical) boat to rent for the trip to San Clemente, three Customs



worked as a cook, but continued to live an outlaw life among the islands.³⁴ He teamed up with Frank Reina, and used the boat *Francine* to steal \$150 worth of abalone meat and shells from Chinese fishermen on Santa Rosa Island on August 17, 1900.³⁵ Their scam was reported in the *Santa Barbara Morning Press*:

Gerald and Reina were arrested on Wednesday on a warrant, sworn to by Ah Poy, charging them with stealing 40 sacks of abalone shells and 20 sacks of abalone meat. In the examination yesterday, it was learned that Gerald and Reina were engaged with their boat to take P. E. L. Hillyer and a party to the islands on a cruise. After leaving the party on the island, the defendants left for a short trip, agreeing to be back at a stated time. When they returned somewhat later than the agreed time, they stated that they were becalmed and could not get back. Wharfinger McNealy of Gaviota testified that during that identical time the defendants came to Gaviota, and from there shipped about 60 sacks of abalones to San Francisco.³⁶

The twenty-seven-year-old Gerald pleaded not guilty, unlike Reina, but both were found guilty of grand larceny and sentenced to four years in San Quentin.³⁷ As they awaited their fate, the two tried to break out of jail by loosening bricks in their cell wall, but guards foiled the attempt.

Future journalist and maritime museum director Jerry MacMullen was warned by his mother to stay away from "that awful boat, the *Lou*," here high and dry in San Diego. On a guano voyage six years before Gerald used the schooner to pick up human contraband, *Lou's* deranged captain had hacked a sixteen-year-old deckhand to death with an axe. She was already an old boat, having come to California dissassembled in 1849, and having served San Diego whalers for years as the sloop *New Hope*.

San Diego Historical Society Photograph Coll.



Name	Wm Gerald
No.	18720
County	Santa Barbara
Crime	Grand Larceny
Term	4 years
Received	Sept 24 - 1900
Discharged	" " 1903
Remarks	

Busted, again: Gerald and Frank Reina in 1900. "The profits are a constant and attractive lure to the idle seaman who either owns a launch or has a friend who does," *The Overland Monthly* asserted in 1913.

California State Library Coll.; photo by Lee Passmore circa 1910, San Diego Historical Society Photograph Coll.



Noticing the loose bricks, "the officials at once suspected the Channel pirates, Frank Reina and William Gerald."³⁸

Gerald was released from prison three years later and moved back to San Diego, apparently beginning anew as a fisherman and owner of the schooner *Neptune*. His perpetually poor catch on frequent fishing trips in Baja California waters, however, led officials to suspect that he was up to his old tricks. In 1906, the revenue cutter *McCulloch* intercepted the *Neptune* and Gerald was "taken on board and subjected to a severe examination from which he emerged undaunted and triumphant." A few weeks later Gerald and his girlfriend sailed *Neptune* to the Coronado Islands and picked up eight Chinese immigrants. He sailed north, but weather turned foul, and fifty-mile-per-hour winds persuaded him to seek refuge in the nearest port despite the possibility of a five hundred dollar fine and five years in prison. Under a headline, "Gerald's Frail Craft with Eight Smuggled Chinks Forced by Gale into Harbor," reflecting anti-Chinese attitudes of the day, San Diegans read that:

Nothing short of a miracle saved the little craft from being swamped by the enormous waves kicked up by the furious blast. The deck was awash almost continually, water entered the hold and put the gasoline engine out of order, and the sails were torn to shreds the minute they were hoisted.

While the eight Chinamen, the skipper, and his wife [sic] were bailing for dear life to conquer the rapidly rising water, the schooner drifted about helplessly at the mercy of the storm. When morning came and the wind subsided both the owners and his illegal passengers were glad enough to escape from the fury of the ocean and taking chances in keeping clear of immigration officials.³⁹

When the *Neptune* arrived in San Diego Bay, under tow from a fishing boat, Chinese Inspector John M. Ballou was on duty aboard his department's launch. As he stepped onto Gerald's boat, he later told a jury,

the defendant and the woman were the only persons visible on deck. The woman was at the hatch bailing out water from the hold with some kind of cooking utensil. Gerald had hold of the rudder. I walked over to the hatch and spoke to the woman. She would not let me go down into the hold. I looked toward the defendant and he told the woman to get out of the hatchway and

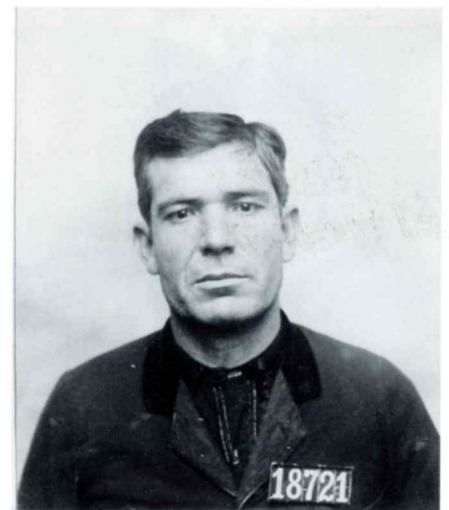


let me go down. I then went down through the hatch into the hold. . . . I concluded that there were no Chinamen on board and had started to come out when I noticed the bare ankle of a Chinaman projecting from under some wet rags and sacks. I then discovered that the eight Chinamen were lying, or crouched on a bench or platform which ran around the side of the boat about two feet from the floor or bottom of the hold. The floor was covered with water which reached up to about where the Chinamen were lying. . . . I came up then, and asked Mr. Gerald if he was captain of the boat, and . . . I said "tell the Chinamen to get out and dress and get in this boat of mine," and he did, and I said "you seem to have some trouble here." "Yes", he said, "I got on top of Coronado Island and I found these Chinamen. I do not know who left them there. I started to bring them in and give them over to the proper officer. Are you the proper officer?"⁴⁰

The newspaper noted that the *Neptune's* terrified passengers "presented a sorry aspect when the hatches were opened by the officials. They were standing in water almost up to their knees, and the rough trip had put a wholesome fear into them."⁴¹

To make matters still worse for Gerald, authorities found articles aboard "the water-logged schooner" that had been stolen from the yacht *Aloha*, including new canvas, line, and—bizarrely—table linen, a bathing suit, and sofa pillows.⁴² Perhaps Gerald was making the *Neptune* more comfortable for his girlfriend (little did she know that she would end up "bailing for dear life"), but in any case his excuses did not impress the jury. He was sentenced to four years in Folsom Prison and a four thousand dollar fine.⁴³

Gerald was discharged from prison in November 1911, now aged thirty-eight. It did not take long for him to return to old habits. Authorities laid a trap for him in July 1912 after Ernesto Gobbi, an Italian laborer, informed immigration officials that he had been approached by smugglers and had been offered money to assist in transporting illegal Chinese immigrants.⁴⁴ Immigration inspectors told Gobbi to cooperate, and the smuggling ring was infiltrated. Authorities learned that Gerald and Harry Lloyd would be celebrating the Fourth of July by landing twenty-two Chinese immigrants at San Clemente Island. Gerald and three Chinese were on the island when the inspectors' boat hove into sight, and the four men ran into the interior. Lloyd and the rest of the Chinese were captured on board Gerald's boat, the *Starlight*. While at large on the island, the four men split



Name	Frank Reina
No.	18721
County	Santa Barbara
Crime	Grand Larceny
Term	4 years
Received	Sept 24-1900
Discharged	" " -1903
Remarks	

Wrapped in the flag in 1910, San Diego's Customs men at top left look self-satisfied, despite the informal quality of the sign above them at their office on West Santa Fe Wharf.

San Diego Historical Society Photograph Coll.



A disheveled Gerald looks aware of his prospect of four years in Folsom prison. At right, an older, if not wiser, smuggler was photographed shortly after his capture on San Clemente Island.

Above, courtesy California State Library; right, courtesy National Archives

up, Gerald going one way and the Chinese the other. Lee Fat Nging testified that "when we landed at that place, this man (Gerald) escaped his way and we escaped our way, we went in different directions, on the shore." Nging had promised, he said, to pay Gerald \$450 in gold to be smuggled into the U.S., but had only given him a promissory note. In response to a question about when he next encountered Gerald, another of the three Chinese, Deah Yuen Wah, answered that "I met him again, about two days afterwards. I was so thirsty and starved to death, so I went down to get some water, I met him at the bottom of the hill, and he saw me, then he ran to the other place."⁴⁵

Inspectors returned to the island three days later and captured Gerald and the Chinese. Meanwhile, officials placed an inspector and several Chinese on board the *Starlight* and sailed her to San Francisco, where they captured those who were waiting to receive the contraband immigrants.⁴⁶

Gerald and Lloyd were found guilty of violating exclusion laws. Harry Lloyd testified for the prosecution and received a three-month sentence in the Los Angeles County Jail. Gerald was sentenced to six years at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, in Puget Sound.

A life of thieving and smuggling at sea was taking its toll, and the lengthy six-year sentence after only eight months of freedom seemed to have broken Gerald's spirit. Both his mother and father had died while the errant sailor languished in prison. Gerald was paroled in Tacoma during the spring of 1917. Now forty-four years old, he began a new life working as a construction laborer and then carpenter in Tacoma. Gerald wrote to prison officials soon after his release:

Dear Sir

This is to inform you that I am still here and doing O.K. . . . I feel like a working stiff and look it now. . . .

I am rooming at 1211 Pacific Ave Hotel Central, until I find a more convenient place. Will this morning start work at six that will be called over time.

Kindly give my best regards to warden and Mr. Tally and all interested

Yours truly

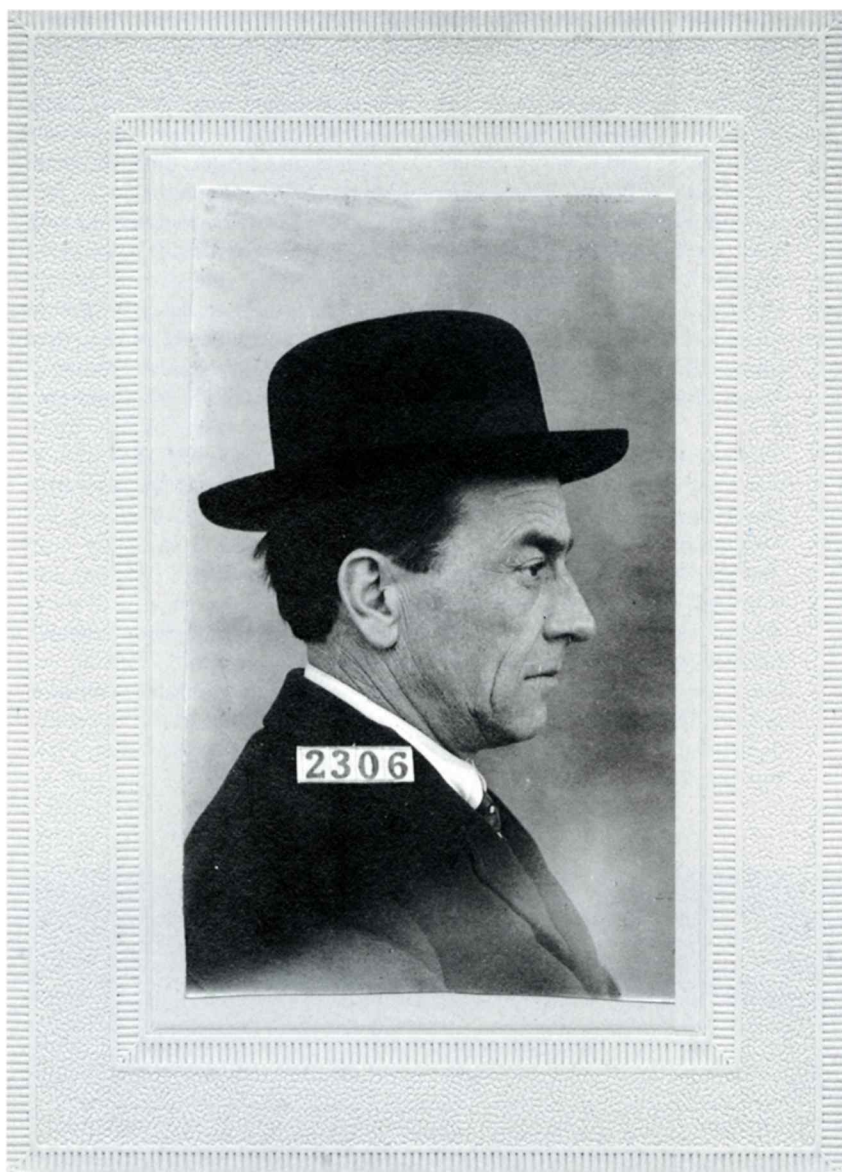
*William Gerald*⁴⁷

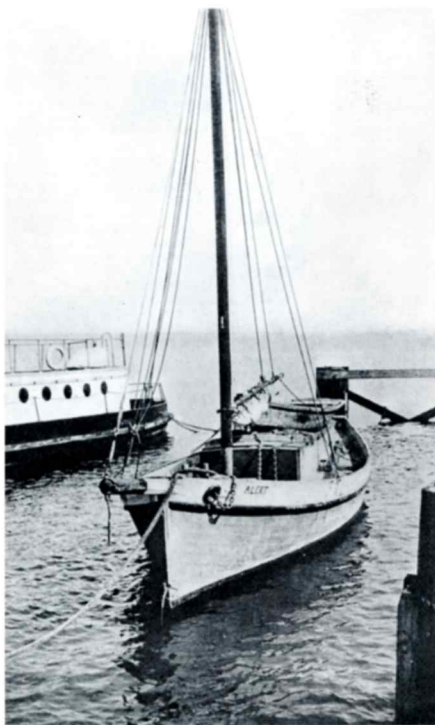
Though he signed with a flourish, the letter writer would no longer haunt the islands and waters off Southern California. He completed his parole and apparently pursued an honest life ashore.

The story of Frank William Gerald is a sordid, twenty-year life of piracy. Like many others who have chosen to sail outside the law, he died having spent much of his life between the walls of prison cells.

NOTES

- 1 U.S. Bureau of Prisons, "McNeil Island Prisoner Commitment Log," prisoner 2306, Record Group 129, National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter NARA), Seattle; Henry H. Weddle, interview by Edgar F. Hastings, 25 February 1959, San Diego Historical Society (hereinafter SDHS); Herbert C. Hensley, "Early San Diego: Reminiscences of Early Days and People" vol. I, (unpublished MS, California Room, San Diego Public Library, c. 1940), 149; Joe Brennan, interview by Hastings, 6 June 1957, SDHS, 9.
- 2 Records of the Superior Court, County of San Diego, case 5709, SDHS; "Suit Over A Yacht," *San Diego Union*, 11 April 1891, 2.
- 3 "Local Intelligence," *ibid.*, 28 April 1891, 5.
- 4 "Great Register of Voters for San Diego County," 1892, 1894, SDHS.
- 5 "Tired Of Goats Meat," *San Diego Union*, 14 Sept. 1894, 5.
- 6 William Woolman, interview by Hastings, 18 October 1960, SDHS, 8.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 The nature of the relationship between Gerald and Henry Gerull is unclear; it is possible that Gerull may have been Gerald's father. Gerald claimed to have had a brother that died at age 2, and Gerull is listed as the father of a 2-year-old who died on Ballast Point in 1874. Records for prisoner Gerald, McNeil Island





The *Neptune*, on which Gerald was captured, was disguised as *Alert* when this photograph was taken. *Overland Monthly* reported in 1913 that smuggled Chinese "are scantily fed, brutally treated, and get little or no fresh air, being kept below to avoid being sighted by passing steamers." Below, the view up Market Street, around the turn of the twentieth century.

Above, *Overland Monthly* 61, 1913; below, MMSD Coll. P7177

- Penitentiary, 12 March 1913, NARA, Seattle; "Died," *San Diego Union*, 5 November 1874, 3. On junks, see Linda Bentz, "Redwood, Bamboo, and Ironwood: Chinese Junks of San Diego," *Mains'l Haul* 35, nos. 2 and 3 (Spring/Summer 1999); "List of Merchant Vessels, 1892-1896," MMSD.
- 9 "Guano Trade," *San Diego Union*, 26 July 1895, 5.
- 10 "After Guano Poachers," *ibid.*, 16 June 1897.
- 11 Jerry MacMullen, *They Came By Sea* (San Diego: Maritime Museum Association, 1988), 50.
- 12 Common island destinations included San Martin (located about 160 miles south of San Diego, near San Quintin), Geronimo (near El Rosario), Elide (apparently also known as "Red Rock," 300 miles south), and Ascension and Natividad (350 miles south). Other San Diego vessels involved included the *Ellen*, *Ida*, and San Diego-built junks *Hong Kong*, *Acme*, and *Pekin*. "Guano Trade," *San Diego Union*, 26 July 1895, 5. *Chromo* also made money by delivering supplies to Baja California mining camps.
- 13 "Outwitted the Officers: William Gerald, Capt. of *Chromo* Escapes Mexican Custody while Delivering Gunpowder at Ensenada," *San Diego Union*, 20 August 1895, 5.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Brennan, interview, 9.
- 16 Hensley, "Early San Diego" I, 149.
- 17 Brennan, interview, 9.
- 18 "Chromo in Port," *San Diego Union*, 15 September 1895, 5.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 4 December 1897, 5.
- 20 "Chromo In Port," *ibid.*, 15 September 1895, 5.
- 21 Hensley, "Early San Diego" I, 149. *Chromo* wrecked north of Santa Barbara as she hauled lumber for the Hollister Ranch two months later; the wreck report notes Henry Gerull as her captain. U.S. Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, "*Chromo* Wreck Report," RG 41, NARA, Laguna Niguel.
- 22 Records of the Superior Court of the County of San Diego, case 8832, SDHS. Smitt sued Gerull but was awarded only \$115.67 after Gerull showed the judge receipts for the expenditures.
- 23 U. S. Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, "Record of Endorsement of Change of Master, Port of San Diego," vessel *Minna*, RG 41, NARA, Laguna Niguel; *List of Merchant Vessels of the U.S.*, 1897; "After Guano Poachers," *San Diego Union*, 16 June 1897, 5; "Marine Intelligence," *ibid.*, 20 November 1896, 2.
- 24 "Corwin on the Chase," *San Diego Union*, 4 December 1897, 5.
- 25 U.S. Customs Service, "Letters Sent Regarding the Revenue Cutter Service," 3 December 1897, RG 36, NARA, Laguna Niguel.
- 26 "Corwin on the Chase," 5.
- 27 "On the Waterfront," *San Diego Union*, 7 December 1897, 7.
- 28 "Corwin's Cruise Ends," *ibid.*, 9 December 1897, 5.
- 29 "Picked Up the Ranger," *ibid.*, 31 December 1897, 6. Smuggling voyages like this one were often made under cover of storm.
- 30 U.S. Customs Service, "Incoming Correspondence, Santa Barbara District," 3 January 1898, RG 36, NARA, Laguna Niguel. In addition to misreporting the name of the *Minna*, this account erroneously states that the cutter involved was the *Rush*.



- 31 *San Diego Union*, 5 February 1898, 3.
- 32 "Gerull and Reyes," *ibid.*, 15 June 1898, 5. "Sausal" was frequently
renedered as "Sau Sal."
- 33 "Arrested for Smuggling," *ibid.*, 22 March 1898, 2; "Local
Intelligence," *ibid.*, 28 October 1898, 5; *ibid.*, 30 October 1898, 5;
ibid., 3 November 1898, 5. Young cooperated with officials and
was not charged.
- 34 "San Quentin Prison Register," prisoner 18720, California State
Library, Sacramento.
- 35 U.S. Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, "Record of
Endorsement of Change of Master, Port of San Diego," vessel
Francine, RG 41, NARA, Laguna Niguel. This incident is
similar to another in the spring of 1900, in which a vessel
raided a fishing camp on San Nicholas and stole dried
abalone and all provisions from three Chinese fishermen, who
were stranded for three months, resulting in the death of one.
See "Starved on a Bleak Island," *Santa Barbara Morning Press*,
27 March 1900.
- 36 "They Stole Abalones," *ibid.*, 28 August 1900. Gaviota wharf was
north of Santa Barbara.
- 37 "San Quentin Prison Register," loc. cit.
- 38 *Santa Barbara Morning Press*, 19 September 1900.
- 39 "Battle for Life on a Stormy Sea," *San Diego Union*, 2 March 1906, 6.
- 40 Records of the U.S. District Court, Southern Division, case 538, RG
21, NARA, Laguna Niguel.
- 41 "Battle for Life on a Stormy Sea," 6.
- 42 *San Diego Union*, 7 March 1906, 6; "Charge Against Gerald
Reduced," *ibid.*, 15 March 1906, 5.
- 43 "United States vs. Gerald," District Court of the U.S., Southern
District, Southern Division, 2376, 20 February 1908. The incident in
which officers of the *McCulloch* were forced to let Gerald go,
despite his notoriety, provided occasion for members of the
Revenue Service to vent resentments that some felt about the
ineffectuality of their compatriots in Customs. See Captain J. C.
Cantwell, revenue cutter *McCulloch*, to Secretary of the Treasury, 12
February 1906, RG 36, letters sent regarding the Revenue Cutter
Service (9L-41) 1894-1913, NARA, Laguna Niguel.
- 44 "Gobbi Tells of Smuggling Plot," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 15
November 1912, 8.
- 45 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, "Segregated Chinese
Files, Los Angeles District," RG 85, NARA, Laguna Niguel.
- 46 See also the perhaps garbled account of Inspector Henry Weddle,
given in a much later interview. Weddle, interview by Hastings, 25
February 1959, SDHS, 27-28.
- 47 U.S. Bureau of Prisons, "McNeil Island Prisoner Commitment Log,"
prisoner 2306, RG 129, NARA, Seattle.



"The *Lou*, a famous old smuggling boat that had quite a record" lies in San Diego Bay shortly after 17-year-old Joe Brennan sailed aboard her in 1900. "We had to go down to Catalina Island to get a load of abalones that the Chinese had gathered up and dried," he told an interviewer. "We got up to the cove where the Chinese had been gathering these abalones and drying them, and loaded them aboard. . . . When we got off Point Loma I wondered why we didn't go into port, but we just kept sailing back and forth until it got dark. After dark we went on in and dropped anchor down by the Santa Fe Wharf." The owner, E. S. Goddard, told him "Joe, these old fellows have been up at that island for a long time and they want to get home. Do you want to row the Chinamen into the dock tonight?" I said, "Well, if you say so. You're the boss!" Brennan, who would become San Diego's Port Director, helped six Chinese men into the skiff. "I rowed them in the dark and landed them at the foot of Second Street or Third Street, where Chinatown was in those days, and I never figured until afterward that . . . we were really smuggling them in." *Lou's* owner at the time was department store owner and philanthropist George Marston, who was apparently unaware of his boat's activities.

Photo and interview courtesy San Diego Historical Society

